(d) The total metallurgical coal consumed by RINL/VSP during the last five years, year-wise is given below:

(Unit:'000t)

Year	Imported coking coal	Imported soft coking coal	Medicum coking-coal	Total
1999-2000	1299	103	64	1466
2000-2001	1761	5889		1908
2001-2002	2667	0	325	2992
2002-2003	2762	0	400	3162
2003-2004	2710	47	449	3206

(e) The amount of metallurgical coal imported by RINL/VSP during the last five years; year-wise is given below:

(Unit:'000t)

Year	Metallurgical Coal
1999-2000	1507
2000-01	1984
2001-02	2924
2002-03	2933
2003-04	2872

Hike in cost of steel production

†159. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that it has been assessed that as a result of recent hike in the price of coal the cost of steel-production is likely to be increased;

(b) if so, the likely per tonne hike expected; and

(c) the percentage of steel producing units dependent on the supply of coal by Coal India Limited?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The impact of the price rise would, however, vary from plant to plant depending on the process used for steel production and the relative efficiency of the plant.

(c) Among the integrated steel plants, only the steel plants in the public sector *viz*. Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) and Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), procrue coking coal from Coal India Limited, to meet part of their coking coal requirement.

Steel products for rural areas

160. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state: the action taken to ensure that steel products reach consumers in adequate quantities in all remote rural areas at affordable prices?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): The Government is not involved in direct sales or distribution of steel except in priority sector *viz*. North Eastern States, Railways and Small Scale Industries (SSI). Under the SSI scheme, distribution of steel materials to the SSI sector is done through States' Small Scale Industries Corporation (SSICs). For those States where the SSI Corporations are not functional, allocations are being made for distribution through the National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC).

The integrated steel plants in public sector *viz*. Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL) and Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL) have an extensive network of stockyards, consignment agents and other storage and distribution channels through which these companies effectively reach rural areas. However, in a deregulated environment, price are determined by the free interplay of forces of demand and supply. Government does not intervene directly in the market to influence prices.